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"Master!" echoed the stranger. Page 12.

Sowing and Reaping.

A STORY FOR BOYS.

BY

E. A. ST. OBYN.

“ Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”
GAL. vi. 7.

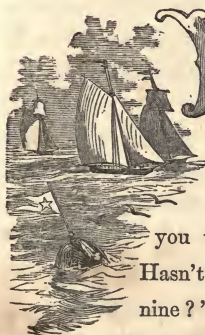
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SOWING AND REAPING.

CHAPTER I.

S E E D - T I M E .



YES, James, that will do nicely. I can attend to all the rest very well myself, and I think it must be quite time for you to go to your work. Hasn't the church clock gone nine?"

"Not yet, mother; but I think I shan't be much longer. I only want to fill

the pitcher and break up some of these lumps of coal for you before I go."

"Never mind them, my boy, now," replied his mother; "you'll be just tired out before you begin the day. Why don't you give yourself a little more time to get to Mr. Lane's in, and then you wouldn't have to hurry so."

"I don't mind hurrying at all, mother," replied the boy, with a cheerful smile, as he began dealing some vigorous blows upon the coal. "I don't like creeping along; it's too cold for that now, too; and besides, you know, the more I can do for you before I go to work, the more time you have to spare for poor little Polly; and she likes to have you nurse her."

The mother sighed as she answered, "I don't find much time to nurse her now, for there's so much work to be done, and so

little time to do it in — and all the ladies seem to say they must have their dresses at once—that I hardly see how I can get it all done, work as hard as I may.”

“There, you see, mother,” exclaimed James, as he took up the pitcher, “the more’s the reason you should let me do all I can to help you. It isn’t much, but still every little helps.”

The boy was outside the door by the time he had finished speaking, therefore the mother made no reply ; but the loving and satisfied look she cast upon him would have told any one that *she* did not think his help *little*, and that he was the pride and sunshine of her life.

Mrs. White went on dressing the little child whom James had spoken of as Polly. She did not seem much above four years old, and was very small and slender for her

age. Her little face had no color in it, and her arms lay in a languid way, wherever her mother placed them,—very unlike the active little limbs of a healthy child of that age, which are rarely given to being in the right place during the operation of dressing, and which seem to have a natural objection to going through arm-holes. James and Polly were the widow's only two surviving children. The others had all died young, and anxiously did the mother watch day by day, as she saw the same look that she so well remembered stealing over the face of the little one.

“Here's the water,” cried James's cheerful voice, as he placed the pitcher in its usual spot; “and now I'm off. Good-bye, mother; and good-bye, little Polly,” he added, stooping to kiss the child. His face was graver as he looked up. “Mother,

how pale she *does* get. The spring is come, but I don't see that she's any stronger; and you hoped the bright weather would cheer her up a bit."

"I *did* hope—," replied the mother, faintly; but she left the sentence unfinished.

James now set off to his work, and at a good pace, for he never *would* be late, and in order to do as much as possible for his mother, he never left himself time to loiter on his way.

This morning a great crowd was collected on the bridge, watching a horse that had fallen into the river, and which was being held up behind a boat; in another street a brass band was performing. But James overcame the desire to stop for either cause, and hurried steadily on, because he knew that the time he should thus waste would

be his master's, and not his own ; and he had been taught the Bible plan of doing work : " Not with eye service, as men-pleasers." He remembered his father's maxim : " Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ;" and so he was not " slothful in business."

James White was engaged in an attorney's office. He had to go on messages, keep the rooms in order, open the door, &c. There were clerks who did the writing. He was only a sort of errand-lad ; but yet he and his mother had thought themselves very fortunate when, coming, as they did, strangers to the city, James had so soon succeeded in getting such a respectable situation ; for Mr. Lane was a very kind master, and the boy's earnings, though small, were a great help at home.

James did stop once upon his road, but

it was only for a few moments, and he made up for it afterwards by running the rest of the way—and that was to buy a bunch of primroses. Polly was fond of flowers, and so now and then, James spent one of his few half-pennies to buy her a bunch, and felt as happy as a king when he saw her large eyes brighten with pleasure and love. On reaching the office, he looked about for a cup or something to put his flowers in. He soon found one, but there was no water, so he placed the primroses in the mug as they were for the present, and set about dusting Mr. Lane's room, and the outer office, and putting everything in order, against that gentleman and the clerks arrived.

James had a busy day. Mr. Lane came early, and sent him a long distance with some notes ; and, on his return, one of the

clerks gave him some work to do. He never thought of the primroses again.

It was rather late in the forenoon. James was alone in the outer office, when he heard a step upon the stairs. The door was pushed open very unceremoniously, and a boy rather older than himself came in. He was by no means pleasant to look at, having sharp, small eyes, and a large, coarse mouth, and that peculiarly unwholesome general effect which is to be seen in all boys who take to tobacco at an age when their grandfathers, (much more wisely) spent their pence upon apples and gingerbread.

The youth in question had a letter in his hand, and holding it out to James, said familiarly, "Here, youngster, take that to your governor, and tell him I'm waiting for an answer." James took the note, and

carried it at once to Mr. Lane's room, from whence he returned in a few moments, telling the messenger that the reply would be ready almost immediately, and requesting him to sit down.

The stranger perched himself upon one of the high stools, and leaning it back against the desk, examined James from head to foot with a curious and somewhat contemptuous expression on his face.

At last he broke silence. "Do you stick yourself in this precious, lively back room all day? What do they give you a week for it? It ought to be something handsome."

Feeling that the latter question was not the business of his companion, James replied only to the former, by saying, "No, I don't stay in the room all day; I'm often out on errands."

“ Oh, well ; but I mean do you come here regular—*work here* every day ? ”

“ Yes,” answered James.

“ You must be a queer one, then, retorted the other. “ I wouldn’t be bound to be in one place every day regular for any money, let alone a dusty, dark, old place like this ; ” and he bestowed a very disrespectful kick upon one of the law books lying about.

“ Does *your* master let you come or not, as you like, then ? ” inquired James, a little indignantly.

“ Master ! ” echoed the stranger, with a shout of derisive laughter ; “ do you think *I’ve* got a master ? ”

“ Why, who sent you with the letter, then ? ” demanded James.

“ Well, a gent that’s down at the door on horseback asked me to bring it up ; and

I dare say, when I take back the answer, he'll give me sixpence, or mayhap a shilling if he's a real 'gent; and I call that a much easier way of earning money than poking in rooms and working; at any rate, it suits *me* a sight better. But, I say, what do they give you a week, here?"

James colored and hesitated. He didn't like his new acquaintance's freedom and boldness; but he had never met with such a character before, and didn't know how to deal with him. He hardly liked to refuse to give him an answer, and besides he saw no reason why he should mind speaking the truth; so he said, after a moment's pause, "I get five shillings a week here."

"*Five shillings a week!*" repeated the stranger with the greatest contempt; "the idea of working for that! You *must* be a soft one. Why, I can get more than that

a day, and work just when and how I like."

"Five shillings a day?" inquired James, with more interest in his manner.

"Aye; many and many a time, as sure as my name's Tom Clark."

"But how do you do it?" asked James, eagerly. "Could anybody else earn as much?"

"Why, yes, to be sure, if they had sense enough. I'd put *you* in the way if you liked."

"What sort of things do you do?" asked James once more.

Tom Clark looked keenly with his sharp eyes into the open face of his questioner, and seemed a little embarrassed; but he replied at length: "Well, I do as I'm doing now—carry messages for people, and hold horses, and — well — *lots* of other

things. There's plenty of ways of getting money turn up in the streets ;” and his small eyes twinkled.

“I think it's better to be in steady work,” said James, rather faintly ; and his companion was just going to answer, when Mr. Lane came into the office with the letter he had been writing, and Tom Clark went away.

He went away, but he had left his poison behind him. James's mind was in a state of confusion. All the rest of the day he thought of nothing but what the strange boy had said ; and he could not help fancying how nice it would be, if *he* could earn as much. *Five shillings a day!* What comforts he could get for little Polly ! How much he could help his mother ! What a sum it would be in a year ! Yes, and after a while more selfish thoughts crept

in, and he began to think of the different pleasures he should like to have for himself; and from that he came to remember how very few he had ever had, and then discontent was in his heart; and he reckoned up all the hours he had to be at Mr. Lane's in a week, and then five shillings seemed to him a miserable sum for so much time.

And was this the same boy who was so cheerful and kind at home with his mother, and had been so willing at his work all day? The very same. James had now met with his first strong temptation, and the weakness of the flesh was evident.

At length six o'clock came, the office was closed, and James ready to start for home. He remembered the primroses, and forgetting how he had neglected them, went to the shelf where he had placed them.

They were dry and withered. While he had been dreaming about what he would do for his little sister if he had the power, he was letting the means of pleasing her which he had within his reach, slowly wither away. James White is not the only one who has made this mistake. Well, the dead primroses did not improve poor James's temper; and when he reached home he seemed so different from what he generally was, that his mother, after observing him anxiously for a little time, asked if he were ill.

He said "No," rather shortly, and took up a book; but his mother's eye soon saw that the leaves did not turn over so rapidly as they generally did in the boy's hand, and going up to him, she gently asked him to tell her what was the matter.

It was impossible for James to be undu-

tiful to such a mother ; he had been silent more from not knowing exactly how to begin, and from an idea that she would not approve of his new acquaintance's plan, than from a deliberate desire to conceal it from her.

So now, with a little hesitation, he related the morning's conversation, painting in very lively colors the brilliant prospect held out to him.

The widow's face looked very troubled as she listened.

"I do not think it was good advice, my boy," she said. "It is not respectable to lurk about the streets in that way, looking out for odd jobs ; it makes boys and men idle, and you can't tell what sort of companions they meet with."

"Oh, I don't see that, mother ; I needn't make friends of people I don't like then any more than now."

“Ah, James, but you may *get to like* those you wouldn’t speak to now.”

“Ah, but only think, mother, five shillings a day would be thirty shillings a week; and what a sum that would be! how comfortable we could live!”

“My dear boy, your father used often to say, Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished, but he that gathereth by labor shall increase.”

“But you know, mother, this would be *labor* too.”

“I’m not so sure of that;—what was this boy like?”

“Well,” answered James hesitating, “I can’t say I liked his looks much, and indeed I thought him very disagreeable at first; but I forgot all that when he began to talk about what he earned.”

“James,” said his mother solemnly,

“you have been a comfort to me all your life. I pray of you to take my advice now, and not listen to what this stranger has said to you. I know no good can come of it. It is far better for you to be in a respectable situation, even if you don’t earn as much. I have no fears about our wanting anything; we have the blessed Saviour’s own promise, that if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us.”

“Well, mother,” replied the boy, kissing her, “I thought of you and Polly, and I would do anything for you.”

“I know that,” replied the widow; but *because she knew that*, her thoughts were not less anxious nor her prayers less fervent for her boy that night. She felt that he stood upon the threshold of temptation; her simple faith in God led her to trust him in his hands; then came the bitter

fear lest he should fall, should be led away and become different from what he had always been to her. It was a long struggle between faith and distrust; but at last her heart seemed to say within her, "Shall I trust God to care for my daily wants, my food and clothing, and shall I *not* trust him with my most valuable treasure, the soul of my son?" The thought seemed to come like a ray of hope and comfort to her; she prayed long and earnestly, and as she rose from her knees, that verse came into her mind (the verse she had often heard her dying husband whisper to himself with smiling lips), "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me;" and another that she had been reading that very evening,—
"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

CHAPTER II.

SUNSHINE AND RAIN.



UT a few days after this, Mr. Lane came out of his private office one morning with some papers in his hand, and looking round the room said to James,—

“Where is Mr. Holmes?”

“He is out, sir,” replied James; “he went about half an hour ago.”

“Where can he be gone?” said Mr. Lane, half to himself, “I don’t remember telling him to go anywhere.”

“I think, sir, I heard him say something about the time the trains started for Black-wall.”

“True, true!” exclaimed Mr. Lane; “I gave him directions yesterday evening to go there to-day, and quite forgot it when I sent Conway to Hampstead; how vexing, and now these papers ought to be copied at once;” and Mr. Lane turned back to his room looking decidedly annoyed.

James stood in doubt for a few moments; he knew he could write a very good hand, but he was afraid his master might think it a liberty if he offered his services. It was some time before he could make up his mind, but at last taking up a piece of paper

he wrote upon it a few lines as neatly as he could, and carried them to Mr. Lane's door.

To his knock Mr. Lane replied, "Come in," and James presented himself with a blushing face, and his scrap of paper in his hand. "If you please, sir," he said, "if you want those papers copied to-day, this is my writing, I don't know whether you would think it good enough."

Mr. Lane looked at it with some astonishment, for it was really very good, and he asked how he had learned to write so well.

James told him that they had once been better off—that his father had been the master of a National School, and had given him, as far as he could, a good education; but that happening to meet with a severe accident by which his head was injured, he

had been obliged to give up his situation, and from that time to his death had rarely been able to do anything, so that the whole support of the family had fallen upon the mother, until James was himself old enough to do a little to help her. He added that his mother had always been careful that he should keep up all that his father had taught him; and he told in his simple way many things about her which interested Mr. Lane very much.

So James was trusted to copy the documents, and very proud of the commission he felt; indeed it gave him more satisfaction than anything that had occurred since the conversation with Tom Clark, which still kept in his mind, and, notwithstanding his mother's wise advice, made him restless and dissatisfied. But he took great pains with the writing; and when he carried it

in to his master, he praised him very much for it, and said perhaps he should employ him that way another time.

Mr. Lane thought about James as he was walking home, but when he reached there, his wife had to tell him about some things that had happened during the day ; and while they were at dinner, Emily, his daughter, had a great deal to talk to him about, and so his thoughts were turned into quite a different direction. Later in the evening, Mr. Lane was sitting in his easy chair, near the fire, reading, and Mrs. Lane busy with her work, and Emily drawing. The weather had changed, and it was become a wet, stormy night ; the wind howled round the house, sometimes whistling among the chimneys, or the trees in the garden, at others dashing against the windows with a violent blow, bringing

with it torrents of rain and rattling hail, which sometimes even found their way down the chimney and fell hissing upon the fire.

“What a night!” exclaimed Mr. Lane, looking up from his book.

“I like to hear it,” said Emily; “it makes this warm fire and comfortable room seem so pleasant.”

“That would be an agreeable reflection,” said her mother, “if we were not obliged to remember how many people are compelled to be out, notwithstanding the weather. I do always pity those poor policemen such a night as this.”

While they were speaking, and just as a gust of wind came like a feather-bed thrown against the windows, followed by a deluge of rain, the door-bell rang.

“Who can that be?” asked Mr. Lane.

“I don’t know,” replied his wife; “I expect nothing to-night, and am very glad that no one has to be out on my account.”

Emily’s cheeks grew red, and she stooped down over her drawing; she had more than a suspicion of what the cause of the bell ringing might be, and she certainly felt a touch of remorse that any one should be out at such a time on *her* account.

For the truth was, that a few days before, Emily had had a new dress bought, which had been sent to be made, without any directions from Mrs. Lane as to when it was to be brought home; for it was not particularly wanted by any time, and Mrs. Lane objected strongly to making people work hard, and at unreasonable hours, simply to gratify a foolish vanity.

But Emily, unfortunately, thought differently; she wanted to have this new frock

to wear at a party to which she was invited ; and so, taking the opportunity of staying a few moments behind her mother in the milliner's show-room, she gave directions that the dress must be sent home on Tuesday evening without fail.

And now her heart began to beat, as she heard the servant's hand upon the dining-room door.

"If you please," said Anna, "here's a dress from Mrs. Chanter's."

"What a pity she should have sent it to-night !" exclaimed Mrs. Lane ; "the person must have been wet through."

"She was indeed, ma'am," said Anna, "as dripping as a drowned rat ; and she said Mrs. Chanter wouldn't have sent her with it, only you said so particular it must come."

"There must be some mistake ; I gave

no such directions," said Mrs. Lane, glancing at her daughter and noticing her heightened color. "Did you, Emily?" she continued, when Anna had gone from the room.

"Yes, mamma," replied Emily, hanging down her head.

"Why *did* you do so?" said her mother, in a tone of great vexation; "you know how much your father and I object to overtaxing work-people, or giving unnecessary trouble to any one."

"But mamma," pleaded Emily, "I wanted the dress so to wear to-morrow, and four days isn't such a *very* little time to make a frock in."

"No, not if yours were the only one to be made; but the same woman may have several given to her, and perhaps be required to make them *all* in as short a time."

“I didn’t think of that,” confessed Emily.

“I think,” said Mr. Lane, joining in the conversation,” if the thoughtless women and girls who order things to be done in impossible periods of time, could only look into some of the houses, and some of the workshops, and see the effects of their cruelty (for it is nothing less, Emily, though I know half of it is done without thought), they would shudder to see the amount of life, or, to say the least, of health, that is sacrificed in order that they may wear a new dress to such a party, or a new bonnet to such a morning concert.”

“O papa!” said Emily with tears in her eyes, “I shouldn’t like any one to kill or hurt herself in working for me.”

“I don’t believe you would, wilfully,” said her father, “but look only at the pres-

ent instance :—Supposing your frock *has* been made without overworking or injuring anybody, what do you think of the poor young woman who had to bring it home ? It is not likely that she lives anywhere in this neighborhood, and has perhaps had to come two miles purposely, and on such a night as this,” continued he, rather indignantly, “when I wouldn’t let a dog go out.”

“I am very sorry, indeed,” said Emily, “and I think I will never do such a thing again.”

“I hope you never will, my dear,” said her mother ; “it grieves us both greatly, as you see ; and independent of our regret for the persons who are sufferers by your foolish directions, we feel that it gives people reason for calling us inconsistent. Your father’s principles and mine are well

known, as being those of persons anxious to improve the condition of the working-classes ; now, might not that young girl say with justice, that she sees no good in professions, if people act in this way, and that she has often experienced more consideration and kindness from those who make no profession at all ? It is our duty, as servants of Him who ‘came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,’ to endeavor to do our best for our fellow-creatures ; and it casts a slur upon Christianity, if we show ourselves indifferent or unkind to others, when those who do not claim to be actuated by love to Him often perform deeds of kindness and benevolence to their fellow-men, worthy of imitation by the most ardent professing Christian.”

“Indeed, mamma, said Emily, “I never thought, when I said what I did, that it might lead to so much harm.”

“That is the danger of doing wrong, my child,” said Mr. Lane; “it may be small at the beginning, but we never can foresee the extent it may reach to. But, Lucy,” he added, turning to his wife, “I wanted to tell you about a boy we have in the office, who interests me a good deal. He always struck me as being a nice young fellow; (indeed I engaged him chiefly because he has such an open face, and meets one’s eye so honestly when he speaks); and he does his work steadily, and the clerks speak of him as very obliging. But I found out something about him a little time ago, that made me like the boy better than ever. You know (or perhaps you *don’t* know, my dear, which is more likely) that I very often find my basin of soup at luncheon more than I care to sup, and the remainder, of course, is left for the office

boys, if they care to have it,—which I have generally found that they *do*, and without spending much time over it. But I observed James, this boy, on two or three occasions pour it away into a cup, and once or twice when I have happened to be in the office when he left, I have noticed the cup go with him. I had an idea, from the boy's face, that some kind deed was connected with it, and so I asked him one day why he took the soup home. He then told me that he had a little sickly sister, and the soup was so much more strengthening for her than anything they could buy, and she enjoyed it so much."

"Since then, no doubt," interrupted Mrs. Lane, looking at her husband affectionately, "you have found your soup too much for you pretty regularly?"

A smile and a look of intelligence were the only reply.

“Then mind, Fred,” continued his wife, “in future you send for a larger basin, and then there will be enough for you both.”

Mr. Lane laughed. “I can’t tell how it is, I have never remembered to mention this to you before ; but, however, to-day I made further discoveries. I wanted some deeds copied in a hurry, and I had foolishly sent out Holmes and Conway together. James saw that I was annoyed, and after I had been in my room again a few minutes, he brought in a scrap of paper very neatly written, and said if I thought that good enough, perhaps I would let him copy the papers. It was very good writing indeed, and I was very glad of his help, as you may be sure. So I questioned him afterwards about his family, and found that they had known better days ; his father

was a schoolmaster, but lost his situation, through ill-health, following upon an accident; and then, of course, they got down in the world, as the mother had to support them all. She is a widow now, and must have hard stripes to keep herself and two children, one of them an invalid; for of course the poor little sick thing must take up a deal of her time, and James's earnings are not much."

"And what does the mother do?" asked Mrs. Lane.

"I never thought to ask," was the reply; "the boy spoke of her work, but of course that may mean a great variety of occupations."

"And did you hear what was the matter with the little girl?"

"I should think it must be something of a decline; she has been delicate from her

birth, and James says she gets weaker and thinner every day ; she does not complain of pain, but never seems to care about moving about, and is never so happy as when in her mother's arms."

"Poor little thing," said Mrs. Lane, tenderly ; "and how often perhaps is the mother called away from her to attend to other things ! I could not bear to leave our darling Oswie's bed when he was ill ; and I can feel for mothers not so happily circumstanced as I. I should like to go and see this family very much."

"That was what I wanted to ask you to do," said Mr. Lane. "The name is White, and here is the address," giving her a card. "I should like to do something for them, if I find them what I believe they are, from James's account, and indeed from his own manner. His father must have taught him

well, and his mother has been wise enough to make him keep it all up ; he is a very superior boy to his present station."

"We will endeavor to go to-morrow then, if it be fine," said Mrs. Lane ; "for I see," she added, glancing at the card, "that it is a tolerable distance from hence."

CHAPTER III.

AN ENEMY.



JAMES left the office in something like his old cheerful mood, and walked homewards, thinking how pleased his mother would be when she came to hear of Mr. Lane having trusted him to copy deeds. But before he had got to the end of the street, a loud voice cried,

“Well, young ’un, here you are at last!” and looking up, James saw Tom Clark be-

fore him. It was strange how at the sight of this lad the cheerful mood passed away, and the discontented feelings which he had first roused began to gain the mastery again. And yet James could not deny to himself that he felt considerable repugnance to this new acquaintance; and his appearance was not improved this evening by the enormous meerschaum pipe he held between his lips, and from which he sent forth every minute clouds of suffocating smoke. He also wore a large pin in his neckcloth, and a very massive-looking watch guard; but James was not judge enough to know whether they were good or not.

He replied rather shortly to Tom's greeting, for his mind felt in a confused state, and he hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry they had met again; but Tom did not seem to notice his manner, and continued with the greatest familiarity,—

“Well, what do you think about what we were talking of the other day; have you made up your mind to give up that slow concern, and get something worth working for?”

“No,” said James, “I haven’t made up my mind at all. I don’t know whether I should like your way of life, and besides, since I saw you Mr. Lane has given me some writing to do, and says perhaps he shall give me more. So, you see, I may get more wages from him than I do now.”

“Yes, and a precious grand rise you’d get, I dare say; two shillings a week more, perhaps, and, I’ll be bound, you’d have to stick to the desk all day as hard as the clerks do. That’d be a very clever thing for you, ’pon my word.

James said nothing; Tom’s influence was working upon him again.

“Now, what I offer you,” he continued, “is really good for something ; you’d get more in a week than you do now in a month,—ay, you’d get more in a *day*, perhaps, sometimes. Why, look at this pipe,” he exclaimed, taking it from his mouth ; “I got that by one day’s work, and it *is* a pipe, I believe you.”

“I shouldn’t care to spend my money upon that, at any rate,” said James, with a faint laugh.

“Well, you needn’t ; there’s many ways of getting rid of money, as well as of getting it ; but I know you’d be sure to do well in my line, you look the right sort of fellow.”

James had too much sense to stand flattery, and this approach to it suggested a question, which he accordingly put to his new acquaintance,—

“Why do you want me so much to take up your line, as you call it; you never saw me before, and can’t care anything for me?”

This home question seemed to take Tom Clark rather aback, and he didn’t appear ready with an answer. After a few moments, he said, with some little confusion, “A fellow may like another fellow, if he hasn’t seen him before;” but glancing askance at James, and seeing him not quite satisfied with this explanation, he continued, “besides, I won’t deny you may be of use to me.”

“Now,” said James, “I can understand why you want me to join you. I always like any one to tell the truth at once; and I want you to tell me something else, before I say more about it. There isn’t anything *wrong* in what you would advise me to do?”

“Wrong?” echoed Tom, with a rather puzzled face; “do you mean,” he asked after a pause, “anything to bring you into trouble with the p’lece?”

“Oh, no,” exclaimed James, “I never thought of such a thing as *that*, of course; but you know there are many things wrong, that the police wouldn’t take you up for.”

Tom glanced aside at his companion with a disdainful smile, which *he* didn’t see, and said: “It’s the fault of them that gets into trouble; if they have their wits about them, they needn’t fear anybody.”

James thought that something more than *wits* was necessary to produce this happy state of things; at any rate he knew he had been taught so; but he let the remark pass without reply, and the boys continued their talk for some time.

At length, in reply to a long description from Tom Clark as to the ways in which James might spend his money, the latter replied: "But, you know, I shouldn't keep it all for myself; I should give a lot of it to mother and my little sister; and we should all be so comfortable."

"What!" exclaimed Tom, with the greatest possible amount of astonishment and contempt in his voice.

"Why, I should give a good lot of it to mother," repeated James, with a rising color, but firmly, for he was always courageous in speaking in *her* praise.

"Well," retorted his companion with a shout of laughter, "I didn't think you were such a donkey."

"What do you mean by that?" said James.

"Why, that I should think a young fel-

low could find a better use for his money than taking it home to buy bread and butter for the young 'uns," was the reply.

James was going to give an indignant reply, but a thought came into his mind, and he said almost pityingly, "Of course you haven't got a mother, or else you wouldn't talk in that way; you'd know better."

"Oh, haven't I?" shouted Tom; "that shows how much you know. I do happen to have one, and a pack of young brothers and sisters, too; but I'm not going to work to keep *them*; that's mother's business, and I leave it to her."

"Then it's very wrong of you, and very ungrateful," said James warmly. "Do you think you've nothing to do for her, in return for all she did for you when you were a child? And do you leave her to

work by herself for all those children? It's too bad of you, Tom Clark. Have you got a father?"

"Yes," said Tom, "I've got a father too; but he doesn't do much but drink, and beat 'em all now and then. It ain't a nice place at all, I'm told; it's more than a year since *I've* seen any of 'em."

"Oh, what a shame!" cried James; "you ought to help your mother, and take care of her; you must be —"

"Now don't you come the preacher over me," interrupted Tom roughly. "I'm not going to stand it. I know what I ought to do better than you do, and I don't want any of *your* advice. And I suppose," he continued sneeringly, "it was thee mother wanted to know if there were anything 'wrong' going on. *I* wouldn't be such a baby, tied to mother's apron string."

“I’m no more a baby than you are,” retorted James manfully; “but I’m not ashamed to take my mother’s advice, nor to *say* that I take it. And it has proved that she knew best in this matter, after all; for she told me I should not be likely to meet with good companions if I had anything to do with *you*.”

Tom looked savagely at his companion and said, “You’d never do for me, I see; I should want a fellow with some pluck in him, not such a simpleton as you.”

“And I,” said James, looking him boldly in the face, “am glad you have come out in your true colors so soon; *you’d* be no companion for *me*, and I hope you’ll find your *wits* enough to keep you out of trouble;” and with this defiance the boys parted.

James’s heart was still in a tumult as he

walked homewards ; but he felt an unspeakable relief ; it seemed like a weight removed to know that the cloud that had been between his mother and himself was cleared away ; and it is something in praise of the boy's character to say, that he felt comforted by the reflection that *she* was right. He had none of that false pride which makes some think it such a hard thing to confess that they have been in the wrong. He was certainly sorry that he *had been* so foolish, and had kept his mother (as he knew he had) for many days in a state of anxiety ; but as for being sorry that the *confession* of that foolishness had to be made, such an idea never entered into James White's honest head. Anger towards his late companion was the chief feeling at first ; but by-and-by there was room for others. He remembered his own

advantages ;—a pious father and mother, a home into which no discord ever entered, his freedom from temptations ; yes, James remembered, too, with a blush, how much he had been attracted by, and how near falling into, this first incitement to evil. Then he thought of Tom's home. A drunken father, continual quarrelling and ill-usage ; and even if there were nothing else, was not this enough to drive a boy to seek other companions, and no doubt to meet with many temptations ? James thought of all this humbly, and recalled the words, “ Who made thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? ” He went on with yet quicker steps, and soon reached home. His mother could not but notice the cheerful expression of his face, and she greeted him with a more than usually loving smile

“How’s Polly, by this time?” was almost his first question.

“She has seemed very weak and complaining all day,” was the reply, “and I have just put her to bed. Poor, little dear, I’m afraid she’ll never be better in this world.”

“O, mother! I hope it isn’t as bad as that,” said James; “you know she was very bad last winter, but got better when the summer came round. But here’s a nice drop of soup for her again — isn’t it kind of Mr. Lane? I do believe since he knew that it was for Polly, he has left some every day purposely, and more than he used to.”

“Polly has had another treat to-day,” said the mother, with glistening eyes; “what do you think it was?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” said James; “violets?”

“No,” replied Mrs. White; “grapes; hot-house grapes.”

“Grapes!” exclaimed James, in astonishment; “where *did* you get them from, mother?”

“You sit down and have your tea,” said Mrs. White, who, having placed all ready upon the table, had resumed her work, “and I will tell you all about it. There! the kindness of people often astonishes me. I’ve thought many a time, if we only knew all the little acts of goodness that are done every day, it would make the world seem much better than it does now, when we hear most about the unkindness and the wickedness in it.”

“I’m waiting very patiently for your story, mother,” said James, laughing as well as he could with his mouth full of bread and butter.

“ Well, then, I had to go out this morning to match the trimming for this dress, and as Polly didn’t like to be left alone, and it was a nice mild morning, I carried her with me. The poor child didn’t seem to notice much that was going on, though I tried to amuse her with the different things; but as we passed by the fruit shop in High street, she caught sight of the window, and said, “ I should like some of that.” I stopped, without remembering how little chance there was that I could buy her anything that was there at this time of the year; and then she pointed to some beautiful grapes and said, “ Do get me a few of those, mother, they look so nice.” My heart ached, Jem, to be obliged to tell her that they were so dear I couldn’t afford it, and I thought what I would have given for even *one* for her. I saw some

oranges in the window, and I tried to persuade her to have one of them instead ; but she only shook her head and said, with her lip beginning to tremble, ‘ No, thank you ; some of the others, only just a few.’ ”

“ Poor, little dear ! ” exclaimed James.

“ *My* eyes were filling with tears.” continued the mother, “ when just at the moment I heard a tap at the shop window, and I saw the mistress beckoning me to come in. I went in, and it seems she had been watching us, though I had not noticed her ; and she looked at Polly and asked me very kindly how long she had been ill, and what was the matter with her : and when I told her, she asked if the child was not wanting something that was in the window. I told her that it was the grapes, but that of course people like us couldn’t afford such things, and I was sorry I had stopped

with the child. I had hardly done speaking, when she reached down the grapes from the window, and took a pair of scissors and cut off a nice little bunch, which she put into a paper bag and gave me ; and as she did so, she said, so kindly, you can't think, ' I wish I could afford to give you more, but I am not a rich woman myself, and at this time of year grapes are dear ; but perhaps these few will satisfy the poor child.' She stooped down and kissed Polly as she spoke, and continued, ' I lost a little girl myself in that way once, and I can always feel for other mothers ; it is so hard to see children long for things we can't give them.' I thanked her with all my heart. but I couldn't say *much*, such unexpected kindness quite overcame me, and, poor little Polly, she did enjoy some of the grapes so much ; she thought she had

never tasted anything so good. Now wasn't it kind?" continued Mrs. White, "and from a stranger, too!"

"Ah, that it was!" exclaimed James; "what a good woman she must be. I should like to have seen Polly's face when you put the first into her mouth."

"It brightened up, I can assure you," said the mother.

After a little pause James began,—

"Mother, I met Tom Clark, coming home."

"What! that boy that came to the office?" inquired his mother, with an expression of anxiety on her face.

"Yes," replied James, "but don't be uneasy about him, mother; I've found out now what sort of a fellow he is; and you were quite right about him. We got very angry with each other, and I don't think it's likely he'll ever speak to me again."

He then went on to tell his mother the substance of the conversation that had passed between them ; which the widow listened to with a thankful heart. She blessed God for having so guided events, that the true character of this tempter had appeared before he had gained more influence over her son. Now she saw the answer to that cry of faith which had comforted her in her trouble : “ Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

CHAPTER IV.

HARVEST.



RA I N fell the next day, and it was not till Thursday that Mrs. Lane and her daughter were able to pay the promised visit. It was a long distance to the street they were in search of, but they reached it in due time, and found out the right

number. On inquiring for Mrs. White, they were told by a woman who came out

of a room on the ground floor, that she lived at the back, up one flight ; so Emily and her mother ascended the stairs. The house had evidently once known better days, or at any rate, richer tenants ; for the staircase was tolerably broad, and the balusters, which were strong and rather ornamental, seemed to be old oak.

Mrs. Lane tapped at the door which had been described to her, and upon being bidden to come in, found herself in a small but remarkably neat and clean room ; and the first thing that struck her eye, was a pleasant looking, middle-aged woman, busily employed upon a black dress, while various articles of mourning attire lay near her. Every thing in the room was in order ; the little diamond-paned window was as clean as possible, and let in as much light as its heavy framing would allow of ; the earthen ware was arranged neatly upon shelves ;

and a few books were placed in order upon a chest of drawers ; the floor and the little wooden table were as white as scrubbing could make them ; and the walls were decorated here and there with some pretty but cheap prints. Mrs. Lane noticed all this at a glance ; and she noticed, too, a look of pain upon the woman's face, a look as of tears, that she could shed, if she had only time.

Mrs. White rose upon the entrance of her visitors, and carefully laid aside her work, so that it should neither be soiled nor creased, and looked with a questioning expression into Mrs. Lane's face.

“ My husband, Mr. Lane,” said that lady, in explanation, “ wished me to come and see you ; for he is much pleased with your boy, and thinks he must have a very good mother, from the way he seems to have been brought up.”

The mother's face brightened up at hearing this ; and she said in a few words how happy she was to know that James was doing his duty, and giving satisfaction.

“Do not let me hinder you with your work,” said Mrs. Lane, observing the widow's eye had glanced towards it while she was speaking ; “we can talk while you go on with it.”

“Thank you,” replied Mrs. White, preparing to take it up again, “I am very much hurried with it ; it has to be done in such a short time.”

At this moment, a feeble little voice cried, “Mother, do nurse me a bit ; I am so tired of lying here ;” and turning round, Mrs. Lane saw in a small bed, behind the door, which she had not before noticed, a little pale child, whose weary young face was very touching.

Mrs. White started up, and hurried to the bedside ; she kissed the little sufferer, tenderly lifted her up, re-arranged the pillow, and whispered, "I can't just now, my pet ; I shall soon have done the work, and in the evening I'll nurse you ever so long."

The little thing sighed and turned round wearily, but she said no more ; and the mother with another kiss, followed by a deep sigh, came back to her seat, and mournfully took up her sewing.

"Poor little soul !" said Mrs. Lane, with sympathy in her voice and her face ; "can you not really spare time to take her for a little while ? that is very hard for you."

The mother looked up with swimming eyes : "Oh ma'am," she said, "I see you can feel for me ; you know what it must be to refuse her ; but this mourning *must* be done ; and what is worse, it was thrown

back by another dress that was ordered all in a hurry to be done between, or I should not have been so hard pushed. But you know, of course, what mourning is ; and I have promised to send this home to-night, without fail ; but it is a hard, hard task for me."

"Do you think the little one would come to me for a few minutes?" asked Mrs. Lane ; "it would be a change for her, tho' it would not be like your taking her, I know."

"Thank you, ma'am, I'm sure," said the widow gratefully, "but I'm afraid (I hope you won't mind my saying so) that she would'nt care to go to any one but me."

"I fear so, too," said Mrs. Lane, kindly, "but let me try ;" and crossing to the bed, she spoke to the little one in her tenderest tones. As she turned down the quilt her

heart throbbed painfully to see the child with tremblings lips, and the tears stealing from under the eyelids, crying quietly. She tried her utmost to induce the little invalid to let her nurse her for a while ; but she shook her head gently, and said, “ No, I don’t care — only mother.”

The mother started from her seat as though she could restrain herself no longer ; but at the moment Emily came up to her mamma with a face of great distress, and holding something clasped in her hand which she gave to her, saying, almost with a sob, “ Look, mamma, I picked it up upon the floor ; and so I have been the cause of it all.”

Mrs. Lane took the scrap from her daughter’s hand, and with hardly less grief, saw that it was a morsel of the dress which Emily had just had sent home, and which she had ordered to be made in so short a time,

With a mingled feeling of sorrow and shame she turned to Mrs. White, and holding out the little piece of silk, said :—

“ Was it this dress that you had to make in such a hurry, and which delayed you with the mourning ? ”

“ Yes, ma’am,” replied the widow ; but she said no more, guessing from Emily’s words and manner, that she had something to do with it.

“ I am very sorry, then, to tell you,” continued Mrs. Lane, “ that we have been the cause of your trouble, for that frock was my daughter’s ; though I did not know till this moment that you were the person who made it.”

“ Don’t say *we* have been to blame, mamma,” broke in Emily ; “ because it was all *my* fault. I knew you would not have let me hurry any one about making it ; and

I gave the directions unknown to mamma.” she continued, turning to Mrs. White. “Oh, do pray believe that mamma had nothing to do with it, and that it was all my fault.”

“I do indeed believe it,” replied the good woman, kindly ; and I daresay, miss, you would have never done it either, if you had had any idea that it would have given any one pain.”

“No, indeed, I would not,” said Emily ; “but I ought not to have done it at all ; mamma and papa have so often told me not to.”

“Young ladies little know what they sometimes make work-women suffer ; I’m sure they would not act so if they did,” said the widow.

“Can I do anything for you ?” said Emily, penitently. “Mamma, is there anything I can do for Mrs. White, to show her how sorry I am ?”

“Look here, Emily,” said her mother, who, during the above conversation had been looking at the widow’s work; “I see Mrs. White is just now sewing on the braid to this skirt; you can take off your gloves and go on with it, while she nurses her little girl for a short time.

Mrs. White protested against the young lady doing any such thing; but Emily had her gloves off in a moment and evinced such a desire to show her penitence, that the poor woman at last consented, and was thus enabled to devote a little time to her sick child.

Mrs. Lane looked with pity upon the thin little face resting against the mother’s bosom. Death seemed to be clearly written upon it; but a satisfied look stole over the small features, as the child felt herself held in her mother’s arms. Mrs. White and her

visitor had a long and interesting conversation, while Emily stitched away with the most unremitting industry. The widow related much of her former life ; and Mrs. Lane had reason to believe her all, or even more than her husband had judged her to be from James's account. The poor mother had now given all hope of little Polly's recovery, and all expectations that the spring would do anything more for her than scatter daisies over her grave. At length the skirt was finished, after many faint efforts on Mrs. White's part to induce Emily to lay it aside ; and little Polly having fallen sound asleep, was laid gently upon her bed without disturbing her ; and the grateful widow prepared to continue her sewing with a lightened heart.

Before leaving, Mrs. Lane inquired at what hour she expected to have the dresses

finished ; and having been told, continued, “ I will send a servant at that time to take them home for you ; you need not then leave the child to night. She is a very steady girl ; you will have no occasion to fear trusting them with her.”

“ Thank you very much ma’am,” exclaimed the widow, “ I shall be most thankful for that. The dresses are to go to Mrs. Chanter’s, as she will send them home with the mantles and other things she has to provide.” And, after receiving many expressions of gratitude, Mrs. Lane and Emily took leave.

The servant who went in the evening to fetch the dresses, carried with her some soup and jelly, and other things, for poor little Polly ; for though, under all circumstances, Mrs. Lane would have been ready and willing to help any body in sickness or

want, she felt particularly called upon in this case to do all she could for those who had been caused suffering by one of her family. As for Emily, she was so distressed at the idea of what she had been the cause of, that she thought enough could not be done, and she was continually suggesting something or other that would be nice for Polly, and proposing a visit to Mrs. White.

She and her mother paid many visits there during the short remainder of the little invalid's life (for she never rallied), and in a few weeks the tiny corpse was laid upon the humble bed, hardly looking paler than it had often looked in life. The widow grieved, as every true mother must grieve, at such a loss; but she did not sorrow like those who have no hope; she knew that her child had exchanged a suffering exist-

ence for a blissful life, and that she was in His hands “who doeth all things well.”

She was deeply thankful, too, for a mercy which she had not anticipated, — which was, that through Mrs. Lane’s kindness she had been enabled to lay aside her work, and devote her time entirely to the little sufferer during the last few days of her life. This remembrance was always a consolation to her, and soothed her under the bereavement.

James, too, felt his sister’s loss greatly. It was a sad night for him when he came home and saw her in that long quiet sleep; and sadder still, day after day, to miss the feeble smile, and the little patient face, which, though it had added little to the *joys* of home, had contributed much to its *love*, and *self-denial*, and *sanctity*.

The Lanes formed a tolerable decided

opinion of the family, from what they saw of them during this season of affliction ; but Mr. Lane thought it right to make inquiries in the town where they had formerly lived ; and from a friend residing there he heard the highest accounts of the conduct and principles of both Mr. and Mrs. White. He now carried out the plan he had long ago formed, and told James that he should for the future employ him in the office entirely in writing, for which he would have a much higher salary, to be increased as he continued to improve. He also had the boy admitted to an excellent evening school, where he could carry on what his father had commenced ; and James took every advantage of this opportunity to grow more useful to his master, and to do his duty better.

So James is going on ; what he will arrive

at, time only will show ; but he is going the right way to become a respectable and useful man ; and Mr. Lane is determined to help him on to the extent of his power.

One day, not long since, as he was going home from the office, he met a crowd of people surrounding a police-man, who was leading off a prisoner to the station-house. This is, unfortunately, a common sight, but still James had the curiosity to glance at the culprit, and was astonished and sorry to see his some-time acquaintance, — Tom Clark. The police-man and his prisoner passed on, but James stood motionless, struck with consternation. After a few moments he asked of the bystanders, what the boy had done. He was told that he had been found trying to rob a goldsmith's shop, by cutting out a square of glass. "It will go hard with him this time," said one of


the crowd; "he's been before the magistrates before now, for pocket picking; he's a bad fellow."

James walked on with a very sober face; and one of the verses his mother had pointed out to him, came back to his mind with double force: "A faithful man shall abound with blessings; but he that hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent."



THE IMPERFECT COPY.

BY A. L. O. E.



EVER busy at your drawing, Edwin?" said his elder brother Henry, as he entered the school-room one morning.

Edwin looked up a moment with a smile, and then went on tracing with evident pleasure the outline of a face. His brother came behind him, and looked over his shoulder; Edwin listened

for his remarks, though without ceasing to draw.

“ You are taking pains, I see,” said Henry at last, in a kindly tone ; “ but I am afraid that you will have to use your India rubber here, and here ; these lines, you may perceive, are not in good drawing.”

“ I don’t see much wrong in them,” replied Edwin, suspending his pencil, with something of vexation in his tone, for he had expected nothing but praise.

“ If you compare them with your study, you will perceive that all this outline is incorrect. Where is the study ? ” asked Henry, looking in vain for it on the table.

“ Oh, it is somewhere up stairs,” said Edwin. “ I remember very well what it is like, and I can go on without looking at it every minute.”

“ Would you oblige me by bringing it ? ”

said his brother, who perceived that as long as Edwin merely drew from memory, he would not see the faults in his sketch.

Edwin went up stairs, rather unwillingly, and soon brought down a beautiful study—a face most perfect in form and expression.

Henry silently put the two pictures together. Edwin gazed with bitter disappointment on his own copy, which but a few minutes before he had thought so good. Not a feature was really like; the whole looked crooked and cramped; even his partial eye could not but see a thousand faults in his sketch.

“I shall never get it right!” Edwin exclaimed in a burst of vexation; and snatching up the unfortunate drawing, he would have torn it asunder, had he not been prevented by his brother.

“My dear Edwin, you have doubly err-

ed ; first in being too easily satisfied, and then in being too easily discouraged.”

“ I shall never make it like that beautiful face ! ” cried the disheartened boy.

“ You need patience, you need help, you need, above all, often to look at your copy. A perfect resemblance you never may have, but you may succeed in getting one which will do credit both to you and your master.”

Edwin took up the pencil which he had flung down, and carefully and attentively studied the picture. He found very much in his copy to alter, very much to rub out ; but at last he completed a very fair sketch, which he presented, with a little hesitation, to his brother.

“ I shall have this framed, and hung up in my room,” said Henry.

“ Oh, it is not worth that ! ” exclaimed Edwin, coloring with pleasure and surprise.

“Not in itself, perhaps,” replied Henry ; but it will serve often to remind us both of an important truth, which was suggested to me when I saw you laboring at your copy.”

Edwin looked in surprise at his brother, who thus proceeded to explain his words :—

“We, dear Edwin, as Christians, have all one work set before us ; to copy into our lives the example set us by a heavenly Master. It is in the Bible that we behold the features of a character perfect and pure. But how many of us choose rather to imagine for ourselves what a Christian should be like ! We aim low ; we are content with little progress ; we perhaps please ourselves with the thought of our own wisdom and goodness, while every one but ourselves can see that our copy is wretched and worthless.”

“What are we to do?” asked Edwin.

“We must closely examine the study set us in the Bible; we must compare our lives with God’s law; and we shall then soon find enough of weakness and sin, to make us humble ourselves before God. When we read of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, we shall be ashamed of our own passion and pride; when we find how holy was our great Example, we shall be grieved to think how unlike to him we are.”

“We can never make a good copy,” sighed Edwin; “we may just give up the attempt at once.”

“You judge as you did when you wished to tear up your picture in despair, as soon as you saw how imperfect it was. No, my dear boy, I say to you now, as I said to you then, you need *patience*, you need

help, help from the good Spirit of God; and, above all, you need to look often at your study, to keep the character and work of your Lord ever before your eyes."

"But if I do my best, I shall still fall so short!"

"I know it," said Henry, gravely, "but feeling that you can never reach perfection here, should not prevent your aiming at it. God will complete his work in the hearts of his servants, not on earth, but in heaven. There the copy, feebly commenced below, shall be made a likeness indeed! For what says the word of God: *We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is!*"

"To see the Lord, and to be made like him; it seems too much to hope for!" cried Edwin.

"It is no more than God has promised,"

replied Henry, "to those who come to the Saviour by faith. Worthless as our copy is in itself, it will be glorified, made beautiful, made perfect; and will be raised to a place of honor in the mansions of our heavenly Father!"

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